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folklife center news



The Folklife Center's 1990 Neptune Plaza Concert Series opened on April 19 with the Lynn Morris Band, a newly formed group from Winchester, Virginia. The concert continues the Folklife Center's custom of beginning the series with bluegrass, and a note on this music and on the second concert in the series appears on page 10. *Photo by Jim Higgins*

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THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Folklife Center Reorganizes

Although the permanent staff of the American Folklife Center numbers only sixteen, the Center engages in an array of activities, from fieldwork projects of original research to programs of lectures, concerts, and publications that "present" American folklife, as specified in its enabling legislation. That same legislation also calls for the Center to "preserve" American folklife, and in 1978 the Center assumed control of the Archive of Folk Song (renamed the Archive of Folk Culture), which had been carrying out that function within the Library's Music Division for fifty years.

To manage its many tasks more effectively, including those associated with its home institution and its Archive, the Center has a new organizational structure, devised by director Alan Jabbour in consultation with the staff. Under the new organization, each function of the Center has a corresponding "unit," and there are operating units for programs, acquisitions, processing, reference, publications, and public events (as indicated in the staff column to the left). Thus arranged, these six units represent the course of activities and materials as they are developed and carried out in projects, processed into the collections, used to service public inquiries, and made into products for presentation and distribution.

Committees have been established corresponding to each of the functions, consisting of a chair and two or three staff members (some from other units), for the purpose of considering problems and offering solutions to the director. In many ways the new structure formalizes and reinforces the collegial workings of the small office as they have evolved over the years, where informal talk among colleagues has often led to a recommendation for a particular action.

The Archive of Folk Culture is no longer a separate administrative unit within the Center, with a separate hierarchical structure of its own. The name of the Archive has been retained, but now refers exclusively to the famous collection itself. The place where one comes to do folklife research at the Library of Congress is now called the Folklife Reading Room. The phone number for folklife reference is the one used formerly for the Folk Archive. Phone numbers for the Center's administrative office and the Federal Cylinder Project remain the same.

"Folkways—Roots of Our Many Pasts"

One does not expect to find an endorsement of the importance of folklore in so unlikely a place as the national budget, but these are strange times. The following paragraphs are reprinted from Richard Darman, "Director's Introduction to the New Budget," Budget of the United States Government: Fiscal Year 1991, Section III.J, under the title "Preserving America's Heritage."

One might ask what "preserving America's cultural heritage" may have to do with investing in America's future. To many the connection is not obvious. But the connection is important nonetheless. To the extent that investing in the future tends to emphasize technological advances—as it should—there is a need to assure a counterbalancing attention to aesthetic values. To the extent that it implies a race through time, there is a need for a balancing appreciation of history. And to the extent that America's traditional cultural values have helped make America uniquely strong, it is important that these values be preserved—in order that they may be built upon as America continues to advance. . . .

America is a nation of immigrants, whose common heritage includes the thinking, art and science of the homelands of those who have come here and are still coming here. It includes the multiple encounters of these immigrants—with the continent, with each other, and with the “Native Americans.” It includes the historic buildings and environments that dot our urban and rural landscapes and record our history and how our forebears lived. It includes the communities, customs and folkways—the roots of our many pasts. The preservation, understanding and passing on of the best of this heritage is essential if Americans are to know what it is to be “American.”

Error in Dov Noy Article

In the following letter to the editor, Professor Fishman is correct in suggesting that the error in the article reporting on Prof. Dov Noy's lecture (Folklife Center News, vol. XI, no. 4, p. 15) belongs entirely to the reporter, who thanks him for his careful attention to the report and is happy to bring his letter to the attention of newsletter readers.

Dear Friends:

I believe there is an error in your Fall 1989 account of Prof. Dov Noy's presentation.

It is not the Hebrew word for “carrots” (gezer) but the Yiddish word (mern or meynern, depending on regional dialect) which is homonymous (I am not sure that your designation “pun” really conveys this) with part of the (Yiddish, not the Hebrew) verb for “to multiply” (as in, to multiply biologically, i.e., not in arithmetic): “zikh mern.”

Since Professor Noy is thoroughly familiar with Yiddish folklore, I assume that the error is that of your reporter rather than his. The main point made by the reporter remains correct, of course, namely, that to fully understand and appreciate Jewish folklore, one must also be familiar with the normative/rabbinic tradition. Nevertheless, since diaspora Jewish vernaculars and their associated folklores get so little recognition in that very tradition, I think that the above correction merits attention all the

more, particularly by those interested in folklife.

Sincerely,
Joshua A. Fishman, Ph.D.
Distinguished University
Research Professor,
Social Sciences, Emeritus
Ferkauf Graduate School of
Psychology
Yeshiva University

Folklife Center Reprints Grouse Creek Cultural Survey

During July 1985 a team of folklorists, historians, and architectural specialists conducted field research in the community of Grouse Creek, Utah, where the Mormon religion and cattle ranching in combination have determined the built environment and the cultural life of the region. Grouse Creek lies in a valley at the boundary of Mormon Utah and the Great Basin's buckaroo country. Its ranching traditions and architecture resemble those of Nevada to the west, while its home and community life resemble that of Utah to the east.

The Grouse Creek Cultural Survey: Integrating Folklife and Historic Preservation Field Research, by Thomas Carter and Carl Fleischhauer, reports on the specific work of the survey but in addition also discusses how the ethnographic information assembled can guide government planning. The project provides a model for the way the various disciplines concerned with heritage protection can work together, and the underlying purpose of the sur-

vey was to find a comprehensive approach to identifying and conserving America's cultural heritage. While there is legislation to protect the natural environment and historic buildings and sites, the intangible culture often associated with these areas and buildings is sometimes ignored.

In 1983 the American Folklife Center published *Cultural Conservation: The Protection of Cultural Heritage in the United States* (the report of a study coordinated by Ormond Loomis, conducted in cooperation with the National Park Service). Since that time the Center has been concerned with heritage protection and with bringing together from various sectors, public and private, persons who share that concern. The effort resulted in the recent Conference on Cultural Conservation: Reconfiguring the Cultural Mission, held at the Library of Congress, May 16-19 (the summer issue of *Folklife Center News* will be devoted to a report on the conference).

In the interest of keeping available a publication that has come to be identified with cultural conservation, the Center has reprinted *The Grouse Creek Cultural Survey*. (The first printing by the Government Printing Office sold out in less than a year.) Individual copies may be ordered from the Library of Congress, Sales Shop, Washington, D.C. 20540, for \$9 plus \$3.50 for postage and handling (orders of \$20 to \$35, add \$4.50; \$35 to \$50, add \$6.50; \$50 and over, add \$10). For orders of ten or more copies, contact Ray Dockstader at the American Folklife Center. □

FOLKLIFE

For timely information on the field of folklore and folklife, including training and professional opportunities and news items of national interest, a taped announcement is available around the clock, except during the hours of 9 A.M. until noon (eastern time) each Monday, when it is updated. Folklife is a joint project of the American Folklife Center and the American Folklore Society. Dial:

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FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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Folklife Center News publishes articles on the programs and activities of the American Folklife Center, as well as other articles on traditional expressive culture. It is available free of charge from the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540. *Folklife Center News* does not publish announcements from other institutions or reviews of books from publishers other than the Library of Congress. Readers who would like to comment on Center activities or newsletter articles may address their remarks to the editor.

INSTRUMENT OF BLIND MEN AND KINGS: A MINI-HISTORY OF THE GUITAR

By Joe Wilson

The following article is reprinted from the program notes for Masters of the Steel String Guitar: A National Tour of American Guitar Styles, produced by the National Council for the Traditional Arts, Spring 1990. Copyright 1990 Joe Wilson.

It is ironic that the guitar has become the main musical tool of the American working class, a common denominator between cowboy and bluesman, jazzman and rocker, hillbilly and ethnic. This instrument has a history that reaches back to antiquity as a tool of royalty and the upper classes, and in the last century was a popular fad of the upper middle class. The administration of a Moscow university prohibited guitar playing in 1921, thundering that "a guitar is not a class-proletarian instrument and is, indeed, an instrument favored exclusively by the bourgeois and middle classes."

The guitar has been assigned other symbolic identifications. In 1963 at the height of the Southern civil rights movement in Alabama, an arch-conservative John Birch Society newspaper railed against "outside agitators led by guitar-plinking pinkos." In the last century the guitar was almost exclusively a woman's instrument, but in our century it has become mainly a male instrument and one strongly identified with rock and roll, the twentieth-century music that is almost always unabashedly male in viewpoint.

The guitar is the most forgiving of instruments. A poor beginning crooner who knows but three chords can carry it on stage and escape without sounding half as terrible as a beginning violinist or pianist would in similar circumstances. But in the hands of a master player the guitar becomes a small orchestra. Its six strings have a compass of more than



The Reverend Gary Davis, one of several famous blues guitar players who are blind. *Archive of Folk Culture*

four octaves, over half that of a grand piano. It has a rich singing tone, it is responsive to mood and deeply resonant, and it offers rich harmonies. It is a paradox, one of the easiest instruments to play, but among the most difficult to play really well.

It has a rich history. Here are the names of some famous persons who played guitar: Socrates, Pythagoras, Alexander, Nero, Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, Louis XIV, Charles II, and Benjamin Franklin.

Guitar-shaped instruments called *nefer* that date to as early as 1,200 B.C. are engraved, painted, and sculpted on objects in Egyptian tombs. A Hittite instrument from 1,300 B.C. has many of the features of a guitar: a flat top with sound holes, a long fretted neck that runs the entire length of the body, incurved feminine sides on the sound box. Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II (1292-1225 B.C.) married a Hittite princess and erected an obelisk that depicts a guitar-shaped instrument.

The guitar name derives from the

Greek for the seven string *cithara*, a form of lyre from ancient Greece. It appeared there shortly after the Trojan War (1193–1184 B.C.) and is found in many Greek myths. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer were originally sung with cithara accompaniment. Much later Socrates (469–399 B.C.) performed with the instrument. Pythagoras, mathematician and genius, helped create an improved fretboard design.

The instrument underwent many changes in its thousand years as chief instrument of public games in Greece and Rome. Nero was not a fiddler, but a cithara player who had himself sculpted in marble with his instrument. It oscillated between being a man's or woman's instrument in Roman times as in our own. Sculptures of instrument-playing ladies—never men—are found among sarcophagus reliefs of early Christian tombs in Rome.

Performers from long ago seem less remote when their performances are described. A description of an anonymous citharist, written in the tenth century by Ikhwan Al-Safa', shows that the virtuoso is timeless:

He played them (the strings) in a way that made everyone in the assembly laugh. . . . Then he altered them and played them in another way, and made all weep. . . . Then he altered them again . . . and made everyone go to sleep.

Life was not easy for the wandering medieval professional. He had to be instrument-maker as well as performer, making his own strings from sheep gut, and usually the oxhide cover for his instrument.

Technical improvements in several European guitars in the early sixteenth century made them popular. They began to push out lutes and lute lovers retaliated by claiming that the guitar was undignified and associated with debauchery and sensual abandon in the streets. And of course the more the guitar was identified with such things the more popular it became.

Soon guitars were in all the new plays and painters were rendering guitarists galore. The painting fad was

to endure for over a century. This popularity percolated the guitar upward in the social structure to royal families. Henry VIII of England and his daughter, Elizabeth I, were performers on the rebec, a form of guitar. The musicians in *Romeo and Juliet* were also rebec players. It became so essential a companion to fashionable young men that when Figaro left his guitar behind in *The Barber of Seville*, he exclaimed, "I have forgotten my guitar! I am losing my wits." The leading thief in Ben Jonson's 1621 play, *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*, calls out, "Give me my gittara: and room for our Chiefe."

But it was Louis XIV of France, the so-called "Sun King" ballet dancer, and Charles II, of the English restoration of the monarchy, that became the most exalted royal players of the guitar. Of Louis it was said, "he was

never taught anything but how to dance and play the guitar." There is so much praise for Louis's playing one begins to suspect that he really was a skilled player, that this praise is not all boot-licking by royal sycophants. The most incredibly decorated and ostentatious guitars ever created were made in France at the time of Louis. His guitar teacher was an Italian, Francesco Corbetta, the foremost guitarist of his time. Corbetta later went to England and gave instruction to Charles II, who became head of a fashionable guitar clique at his court.

Colonial and Revolutionary America was well-supplied with English and French guitars. Benjamin Franklin was a guitarist; so was Francis Hopkinson, another signer of the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson's daughters Polly and Maria



Louis XIV of France, of whom it was said, "he was never taught anything but how to dance and play the guitar." (LC-USZ62-77776) Painting by Hyacinthe Rigaud

took lessons in France when their father was ambassador, and instruments were brought back to Monticello. Here as in Europe it was an instrument of the upper classes. Yet some early guitars were taken to the frontier. Rachel Jackson, wife of President Andrew Jackson, owned a French-made guitar in middle Tennessee in the 1820s.

A tradition of parlor guitar performance by young women of wealthy and upper middle class families started in Europe in the late 1700s and gained momentum in the early 1800s. These young ladies from the upper crust learned light classical and semi-classical items, romantic tunes, and more. These were performed in social settings for their suitors and family members. This fad soon trickled down to the urban and rural middle class masses and became a huge popular movement. Like other large-scale popular fads, it created a commerce, primarily in sheet music publishing and in the sale of new and improved instruments.

The fad struck the United States with full force in the post-Civil War period and had much to do with the creation of better guitars and the spread of open tunings. Places as distant from urban centers as rural Mississippi and Hawaii felt the parlor fad. Black musicians all over the United States call open D tuning "Vastopol" from "The Siege of Sebastopol," a parlor sheet music item published in 1880 that celebrates an episode in the Crimean War.

White and black musicians in many areas of the country call an open G tuning "Spanish," for the musical exercise "The Spanish Fandango," by far the most popular of parlor pieces and found even today in living tradition everywhere in the nation.

The movement of the guitar down from the genteel parlor tradition to working class people brought striking changes to performance. Some skills from parlor tradition were retained; for example, the use of the thumb as a steady alternating bass, marking the main beats of the piece, while other fingers syncopate a melody on the treble strings.

But the new players took the instrument and these techniques away from

a slavish reliance upon written materials and trickle-down faddism. They subjected it to the creativity of the streets and store porches and blended it with other instruments. Black players were among those who warmly embraced this new instrument and subjected parlor techniques to further development. It was quickly added to the minstrel and string bands of rural whites.

The increase in commerce and scientific advances brought major technical improvements to the guitar in the mid and late 1800s. Among these were mechanical tuning machines, improved strings of a standard length, and new ways of bracing.

The sound of plucked instruments had traditionally been a one-person sound until this century. It was a sound for small rooms and small audiences. Parlor styles had become a mass fad in part because the parlor was an ideally suited room for guitar—and more families had parlors. Other string instruments were massed and collectivized into banjo, mandolin, hammered dulcimer, and balalaika orchestras, but not the guitar.

Among the technical innovations most beneficial to guitar players at the end of the last century was a huge in-

crease in the number of high-quality acoustic music halls. Most of the hundreds of thousands who experienced concerts by the great master Andre Segovia probably did not realize that he was as technologically dependent as a rock and roll guitarist. He hated electric guitars and thought all sound reinforcement an assault on human hearing, but his career was made possible by acoustic studies and the building of halls that would reflect and project sound. This is as much a technical innovation as the making of an electric guitar, and in many ways a more complex one. It enabled Segovia to perform in halls filled with hundreds and, in some fine halls, as many as three thousand, rather than with dozens of people.

Metal-strung guitars have been around for centuries and have a history in several countries, but all the types of steel-string guitars now in use are of American origin and were developed at the end of the last century or early in this century. They offer greater volume and demand a much stronger bracing of the top. They are preferred because of their sound.

The two major types of steel-string acoustic guitars are the flat-top and the arch-top. There is a fundamental



Maybelle, A.P., and Sara Carter, the original Carter Family. Maybelle used her income from their 1927 Victor recordings to buy this Gibson arch-top guitar. *Archive of Folk Culture*

acoustic difference in how they operate. Strings on a flat-top terminate at a bridge that is glued to the top and string vibrations are transferred to the top by a rocking motion of the bridge. Strings on the arch-top pass over the bridge and attach to a tail-piece, and the top is subject primarily to vertical movement. The soundboard of the flat-top needs more bracing to resist the pull of the strings and to distribute vibrations.

The flat-top developed from earlier gut-string guitars, but the arch-top has always been made for steel strings. Orville Gibson, founder of the Gibson Guitar Company early in this century, was the person most responsible for the development of the arch-top. He adapted some violin-making techniques to guitar construction, including carving graduated tops. He said that he was inspired by the workmanship of Antonio Stradivari. C.F. Martin I of the Martin Guitar Company invented the X bracing that made it possible to adapt the flat-top to new responsibilities in this century.

The 1920s and 1930s were a heyday for the arch-top guitar and its considerable volume and short sustain made it ideal for dance bands and jazz orchestras. Played with a pick, it offered an incisive beat for rhythm or fast solo runs.

The new flat-tops being made by the Martin company were offered in a new and larger "D size" that emphasized the bass. Martin's shop workers preferred the older, smaller guitars that better balanced volume across the tone spectrum and they jeeringly dubbed these big guitars as "dreadnaughts" after the big ships of the British navy. But the bass emphasis was helpful in the new string band ensembles where the new Martin was being heard.

A third American innovation on guitar construction came from the Dopera brothers, who in 1926 invented an all-metal resophonic guitar. They were partners in a company called National, and these instruments came to be called "National steel" guitars. Actually, the metal was bell brass. These instruments had internal acoustic speakers that were intended to increase the volume of the instruments to serve a popular craze for



During the sixties, the popularity of The Kingston Trio led many college students to purchase guitars. *Archive of Folk Culture*

vaudeville "Hawaiian" music which, in many cases, was not actually from Hawaii. The brothers split from National in 1928 and formed the Dobro company (the name is a contraction of Dopera brothers) and offered guitars with wood bodies and metal resonators in 1929.

The Dobro has a link to the old parlor fad. In Hawaii the open-tuned guitar was sometimes played with a metal bar, the strings not pressed to the frets, the bar gliding up and down the strings in a sweeping motion, producing a wavering tone of variable pitch. It was a new and exciting sound and it came to the mainland in the 1890s and was incorporated into such shows as the Broadway show *Firebird*. A "Hawaiian" popular music fad was created that continued until the 1930s.

Dobro and National steel guitars moved from "Hawaiian" music into the new forms of country and blues musics in the 1920s. Other innovators

had been working on the volume problem, and the application of electricity to the guitar made these instruments obsolete. But some players liked the tone of these acoustic instruments, and began liberating them from the hock shops where the vaudeville players had left them. Among players who took up the National steel were such great blues performers as Bukka White, Blind Boy Fuller, Memphis Minnie, Tampa Red, and Leroy Carr.

Among country players who liberated Dobros from pawnshops were Jimmy Tarlton, Howard Dixon, Cliff Carlisle, Beecher Kirby (Brother Oswald), Speedy Krise, Jenks Carmen, Shot Jackson, James Kimbrough, Tut Taylor, Josh Graves, and Mike Auldridge—that is almost the whole list of Dobro players from the 1920s until the arrival of a teenaged Jerry Douglas in the 1970s. Inspired by Josh Graves, Douglas rewrote the rules.

The most far-reaching of guitar innovations has been the application of electricity to the instrument. The ancient problem of volume was left far behind. In prior centuries the instrument had been often overwhelmed by the greater volume of other instruments. But no more. With the microphone technology of recording and sound reinforcement, even the acoustic guitar could take solo lead "breaks" with ensembles.

Among the innovators who brought electricity to the guitar was acoustic engineer Lloyd Loar, a musician and composer who had earlier helped the Gibson company develop its famous Mastertone banjo, F-5 mandolin, and improved arch-top L-5 guitar. Loar left Gibson in 1924 and helped found the Vivi-Tone Company and introduced several electrics.

The first electrics seem to have been steel guitars played with a bar and these instruments were to develop in amazing ways until the 1960s. Equipped with two or three necks and as many as a dozen pedals, each capable of retuning the instrument, the "pedal steel guitar" became a form of mechanical synthesizer largely used in country music.

It was electricity that moved the jazz guitarist into the limelight. The player who first caught the ear of the nation was Charlie Christian, performing in Benny Goodman's band. He died of tuberculosis at age twenty-three. In the 1940s French Gypsy Django Reinhardt left a strong imprint on jazz guitar. During the 1950s the idiom was much enlarged and enriched by a bevy of great players who still dominate the field: Tal Farlow, Barney Kessel, Herb Ellis, Johnny Smith, George Van Eps, and Kenny Burrell. Charlie Christian had used the new access to volume to put great guitar solos into jazz ensemble playing. The players listed here enlarged upon his legacy and made jazz guitar a new and exciting idiom that could stand on its own feet.

The volume problem had weighed heavily upon blues guitar performance until the advent of the new and louder steel string guitars. Those instruments and electric recording technology set off a boom of blues recordings in the 1920s. These new performers were

working people, their music came from the streets and store porches. Many were handicapped players who were wrestling a living on the streets with a tin cup. They played in bars and whorehouses. "Starvation is the father of the blues," said Knoxville's Crippled John. "I know him well."

Among the most famous blues guitar players were blind men: Blind Blake, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Willy McTell, Blind Willy Johnson, Blind Boy Fuller, Blind Gary Davis. Some great players had peg legs: Furry Lewis, Peg Leg Howell. Many bluesmen lived the brawling, drinking, and womanizing lives they sang about and spent major parts of their lives in jail. More than a few died young. Among them was Robert Johnson, possibly the all-time favorite of blues fans. It was a tough scene for women and Memphis Minnie was the one great female guitarist who left a sizable recorded legacy.

While "Hawaiian" guitar that was not always Hawaiian was being heard as mainland popular music, major changes came to real Hawaiian music. The parlor trick of tuning open became a basis of slack-key style in the Islands. A tune was rendered with as many open strings as possible so that the instrument could resonate freely, then the strings were "slacked" (retuned) so that the next tune could have as many open strings as possible. This picking style has not been heard much on the mainland, but it has always surpassed slide styles in popularity in Hawaii. Among the most influential players are Gabby Pahinui, Raymond Kane, Sonny Chillingsworth, Atta Isaacs, and Ledward Kaapana.

Country and rockabilly guitar has heroes that are electric and acoustic. Among the great acoustic players who have been highly influential during the past fifty years are Maybelle Carter, Sam McGee, Don Reno, George Shuffler, Dan Crary, Norman Blake, Tony Rice, and especially Doc Watson.

There is a Cajun acoustic superpicker: David Doucet. The list of electric country guitar heroes is long: Merle Travis, Jimmy Bryant, Scotty Moore, Chet Atkins, Duane Eddy, James Burton, Hank Garland, and Grady Martin, among others. Their

influence reached around the world behind the recordings of Elvis Presley, Rick Nelson, and others. Portions of England became musical suburbs of Memphis and Chicago. Among those who internalized their lessons was young Albert Lee in England. He had to play both the electric lead and electric steel leads from the Speedy West and Jimmy Bryant recordings, not an easy task, but no one was there to tell him it was impossible, and it led to a discipline and a drive and an excitement that has endured in his music.

Among pop guitarists there is a very special place that was carved out by Les Paul, guitarist, technician, composer, inventor. He started in the 1930s as a country player known as Rhubarb Red before moving into jazz and pop idioms. The first to do multi-track recordings, he also pioneered in the creation of solid-body guitars. These instruments have provided latitude for new forms of showmanship. Jimi Hendrix based much of his act upon tearing his guitar apart—stomping it, smashing it, and grinding it into the floor.

The best guitars ever made are being made right now and right here in the United States. The application of electricity to hand tools has created a renaissance of instrument making, and the very best instruments are custom made in small shops. These small shops are found everywhere in the country, from Cape Cod to the fine little shop near where the road ends on the north side of Hawaii's Big Island. Rugby, Virginia's Wayne Henderson is one of this new brand of luthiers. Asked to name his most important tool at a 1977 Smithsonian instrument workshop, Wayne said it was his pocketknife and that he wore one out every year.

These are the guitar elements that have influenced the creation of the musics that have spread from our nation to all the world. The iron curtain could not shut them out. Their working class vitality is intact. Keep your eye on the guitar. More good stuff is coming. □

Joe Wilson is director of the National Council for the Traditional Arts.

BURL IVES DONATES HIS GUITAR TO THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

By James Hardin

The Hauser, they call it, a guitar made about 1950 for the great American balladeer Burl Ives. It is the guitar he used to serenade Pablo Casals in Spain. ("Yes, this is art," Casals remarked, after hearing "Wayfaring Stranger," and he then played a little concert for Burl Ives on the cello.) It is the guitar Ives's friend Carl Sandburg loved to hear, the one that is "so much like the voice itself." This well-loved Hauser is now at the Library of Congress, presented by Burl and Dorothy Ives after a concert here, September 21, 1989, in honor of the Year of the Young Reader.

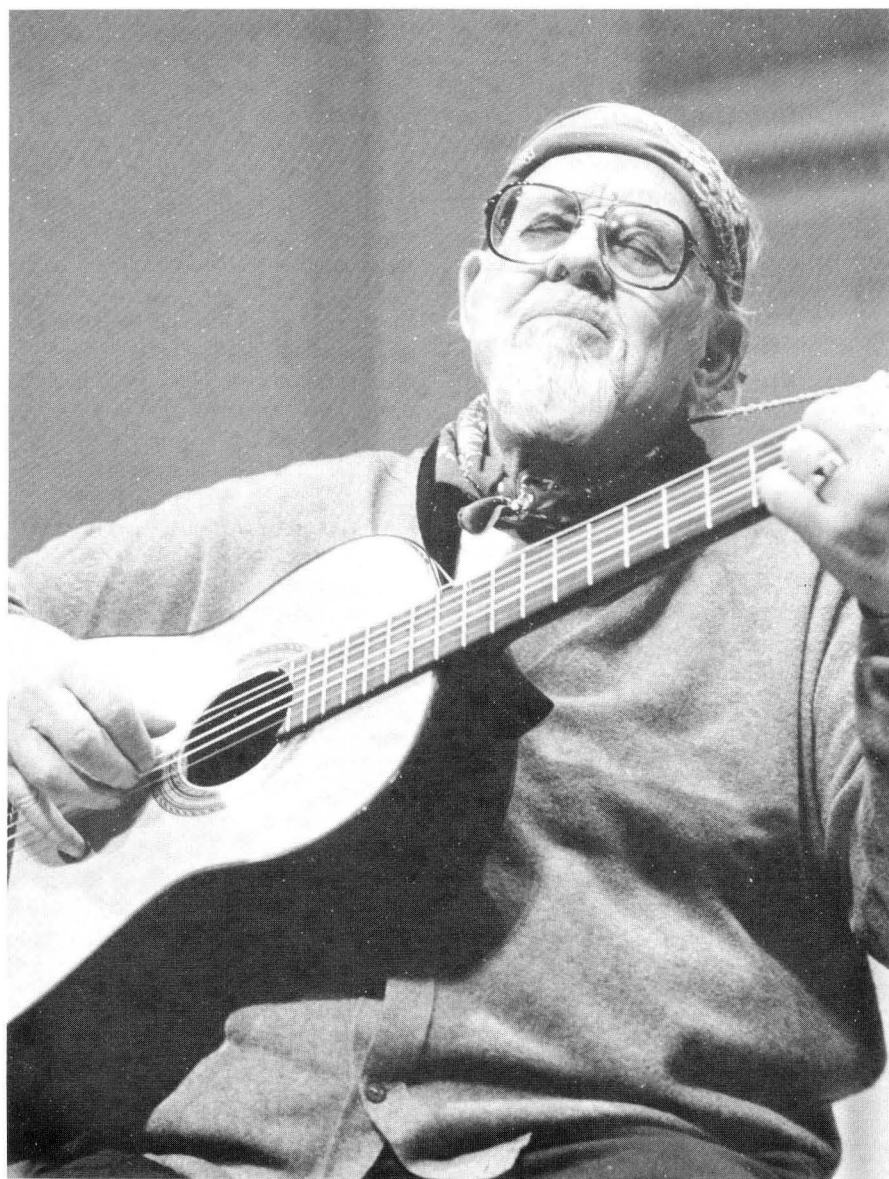
The concert was sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, which was established by Congress in 1977 to stimulate public interest in books, reading, and the printed word. It is the freshness of a child's first experience of the world that characterizes Burl Ives's rendition of the folksongs he popularized, and he was a natural selection for a concert honoring young readers. It is the simplicity of these "ancient ballads" that has always appealed to him and for many of us it is difficult to think of such songs as "Blue Tail Fly" and "Frog Went a-Courtin'" without hearing his distinctive voice.

Burl Ives owned three Hauser guitars like the one he gave to the Library, made by a German master who made only about twenty-eight altogether. (The other two will eventually be donated to other institutions.) Ives ordered the second guitar because he liked the first one so much and worried that something might happen to it; he was presented with the third.

The gift of the first of the three Hausers commemorates a long and happy association with the Library of Congress. Ives learned songs by doing research in the Library's Archive of

American Folk Song and from Alan Lomax, who became head of the Archive in 1936. He recorded for the Archive in 1938 and 1951, and made a donation of recordings, photographs, and manuscript materials in 1966. Ives first thought of giving his guitar to the Library in 1978, when he attended the fiftieth anniversary

celebration of the Archive and served as master of ceremonies for a concert held that evening. It will now be housed with the collections of the Library's American Folklife Center, thus honoring the place that honors the songs he loves and keeps them safe for future generations. □



Burl Ives in September 1989, rehearsing for his Library of Congress concert.

CONCERT SERIES OPENS WITH BLUEGRASS AND KLEZMER

American Bluegrass Is International Favorite

By Lee Michael Demsey

The 1990 Neptune Plaza Concert Series opened on April 19, with the Lynn Morris Band, a newly formed group from Winchester, Virginia. This year six concerts of ethnic and regional music and dance will be presented on the plaza in front of the Library's Thomas Jefferson Building, on the third Thursday of each month from April to October. They include Klezmer, Hungarian, Piedmont Blues, Gospel, and Hispanic. The series customarily has opened with bluegrass.

Bluegrass music is one of America's great folk music forms. It was born nearly fifty years ago, but its traditional roots go back much further. Yet, a whole new generation of great musicians and vocalists keep the music thriving and, perhaps, more vibrant than ever.

Bill Monroe is the founding father of this music. His blending of mountain music, blues, country, folk, and Irish fiddle tunes gained popularity through the 1940s, primarily in the South. Through the 1950s the music began to reach a wider audience with big names emerging such as The Stanley Brothers, Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs, and Mac Wiseman. In the 1960s, The Country Gentlemen and other groups toured college campuses across the country, introducing young people to this acoustic music. In Washington, D.C., in the 1970s, the Seldom Scene spearheaded a more contemporary bluegrass sound, and that opened the doors to many young, adventurous bluegrass pickers who formed their own bands.

Nowadays, bands (consisting primarily of a banjo, fiddle, mandolin, guitar, and bass) are springing up all over the world. Bluegrass is very popular in Japan and in many European countries, and it has a strong cult following in North America.

Band Performs Traditional Klezmer Music

By Henry Sapoznik and
Thea Caemmerer

Inclement weather forced indoors the second concert in the 1990 Neptune Plaza series, Klezmer Plus, a band from New York City led by Henry Sapoznik. The group performs klezmer music as it might have been played in the United States fifty to seventy-five years ago. Sapoznik plays tenor banjo; Pete Sokolow, the keyboard; Sid Beckerman, clarinet; Howie Leess, sax; and David Licht, drums.

The past decade has witnessed a revival of interest in klezmer music, the traditional dance music of the Yiddish-speaking Jews of Eastern Europe. The Yiddish word *klezmer* comes from the Hebrew "klei zemer," which means musical instruments. *Klezmer* has come to refer to both the musicians and the music they play. Though most klezmer musicians are Jewish, some bands past and present have included non-Jewish players.

Klezmer music is played mainly for dancing. It combines synagogue prayer modes and local non-Jewish melodic prototypes in a variety of minor, modal, and major scales. Early on, the music was played on instruments such as the *fidl* (violin), *baraban* (drum), *tsimbl* (hammered dulcimer), and *flayt* (flute).

While klezmer uses modes of traditional Jewish music, it also borrows from the musical traditions of Romanian Gypsies, Ukrainians, Poles, Russians, Greeks, and Turks. Klezmer is hundreds of years old but has undergone modifications as new dance styles evolved and new instruments came into use. By the nineteenth century, instruments such as the clarinet, trumpet, trombone, and tuba marked the increasing influence of martial music on the previously more string-oriented ensembles. The spectrum of tune

types, meters, and rhythms also reveals a wide variety of influences: brisk tunes in 2/4 such as *freylekhs* (lively dances), *bulgars*, and *shers* (scissor dances), and slower *husidl's* and *terkishes*. In triple meter there are both waltzes and horas, also called *krimer tantsn* (limping dances). The free-metered, subtly improvised *doina* is a form common to both Yiddish and Romanian instrumentalists.

When Jewish musicians came to America they encountered and incorporated the popular music forms of ragtime, dixieland, and jazz. The United States also offered expanded venues for these players in the recording industry, Yiddish theater, Catskill hotels, and Yiddish-language radio programs. By the end of World War II, with the destruction of the East European breeding ground of Yiddish culture and the rise of Israeli society, emphasis shifted from Yiddish to Hebrew consciousness, and the skills of traditional klezmer musicians were redirected, or in some cases lost.

This last decade has seen a dramatic renewal of interest in the study and performance of klezmer music. Across the United States, Europe, and Israel, more and more musicians, scholars, students, and enthusiastic audiences are insuring the continued presence of this traditional form in their communities. □

(right)

Juha Pentikäinen at the reception following his April 19 lecture at the Library of Congress, with Ritva Poom, the translator of his book *Kalevala Mythology*.

FINNISH SCHOLAR LECTURES ON THE *KALEVALA*

By James Hardin

The hundred fiftieth anniversary of the publication of the *Kalevala* was celebrated in 1985, stimulating many scholars to review the contributions of this great epic to the creation of a Finnish national identity. Among the works undertaken at that time was *Kalevala Mythology* by Juha Pentikäinen, now available in English from

Indiana University Press. On April 19, Professor Pentikäinen presented a lecture at the Library of Congress entitled "A Shamanistic Interpretation of the *Kalevala*." A reception sponsored by the Embassy of Finland followed the lecture.

In writing his book, Professor Pentikäinen focused on the mythology as-

sociated with the *Kalevala*, including the nation-building myths that have been so important to the nineteenth-century creation of a modern Finland. The *Kalevala* was compiled by Elias Lönnrot from the folklore he collected while doing fieldwork during the 1830s and 1840s and published in two editions in 1835 and 1849. The shamanistic point of view Pentikäinen has employed in examining this body of folklore stresses the importance of the thoughts and dreams of the people (rather than historical and geographical reality) as crucial in creating a national identity.

Pentikäinen spoke of the importance of fieldwork for such a compilation as the *Kalevala*, and he presented a documentary video he had made in Siberia on a field trip of his own. In Siberia, he studied a community of people whose lives are permeated by myth and symbolism, from the ritual killing of reindeer to viewing the stars in the night sky, and he noted that many of the same myths he discovered there are recorded in the *Kalevala*.

The community is guided through its traditional rituals by a shaman, and Pentikäinen said that shamanism is part of an ethnic revival in the region. Near the end of his lecture, he revealed the poignant irony that the ancient people he studied during his field trip live above one of the richest natural gas deposits ever discovered on this planet. Given this situation, it is hard to imagine that their way of life will be left undisturbed by an energy-hungry outside world.

Juha Pentikäinen is professor of comparative religion at Helsinki University and docent in folkloristics and comparative religion at the University of Turku. *Kalevala Mythology* is available from Indiana University Press, 10th & Morton Streets, Bloomington, Indiana 47405. The price is \$25 (there is a special price of \$20 for individuals) plus \$1.75 for shipping fourth-class mail or \$2.75 UPS. □





Selection panel for the American Folklife Center's 1989 edition of *American Folk Music and Folklore Recordings*, which met at the Library on March 22-23. Around the table from left to right: Mark Slobin, Joe Wilson, Barry Lee Pearson, Neil V. Rosenberg, and Charlotte J. Frisbie. Standing are project coordinator Jennifer Cutting and assistant Andras Goldfinger. An article on the history of the guitar by panelist Joe Wilson appears on page 4.

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